

# water facts

No. 3

## Adjudicated Groundwater Basins in California

The State of California is not authorized by the *California Water Code* to manage groundwater. California landowners have a correlative right to extract as much groundwater as they can put to beneficial use. In some basins, that correlative right has been defined by a court. In other basins, the correlative right has not yet been defined. Groundwater management programs have usually been developed on an ad hoc basis in response to local initiative through local agencies, adjudication, and districts formed by special legislation. Two additional methods have recently become available:

1) AB 3030 (*Water Code Section 10750 et seq*) allows certain existing local agencies to manage groundwater; and 2) city and county ordinances. This *Water Facts* explains groundwater management by adjudication.

Water Facts are short reports on water resources issues of general interest. They are published periodically by the Department of Water Resources and can be obtained free by contacting DWR Bulletins & Reports, P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, CA 94236-0001; 916/653-1097.

In some California groundwater basins, the landowners or other parties turn to the courts to settle disputes over how much groundwater can rightfully be extracted by each landowner. In turn, the courts study the available data to arrive at an equitable distribution of the groundwater that is available each year. This court-directed process can be lengthy and costly, although some of these cases have been resolved with a court-approved negotiated settlement, called a stipulated judgment. Unlike overlying and non-overlying rights to groundwater, such decisions guarantee each party to the decision a proportionate share of the groundwater that is available each year.

In **adjudicated groundwater basins**, the court appoints Watermasters to oversee the court judgment. In 15 of these basins, the court judgment limits the amount of groundwater that can be extracted by all parties. The basin boundaries are defined by the court and generally do not include an entire basin as defined in Department of Water Resources *Bulletin 118*. Puente Narrows is an addendum to the Main San Gabriel Basin adjudication that requires a minimum underflow of 588 acre-feet per year from Puente basin to Main San Gabriel Basin. The Santa Margarita Basin was adjudicated in federal court. That decision requires water users to report the amount of surface water and groundwater they use, but groundwater extraction is not restricted.

(continued on page 4)

# Adjudicated Groundwater Basins and Watermasters in California

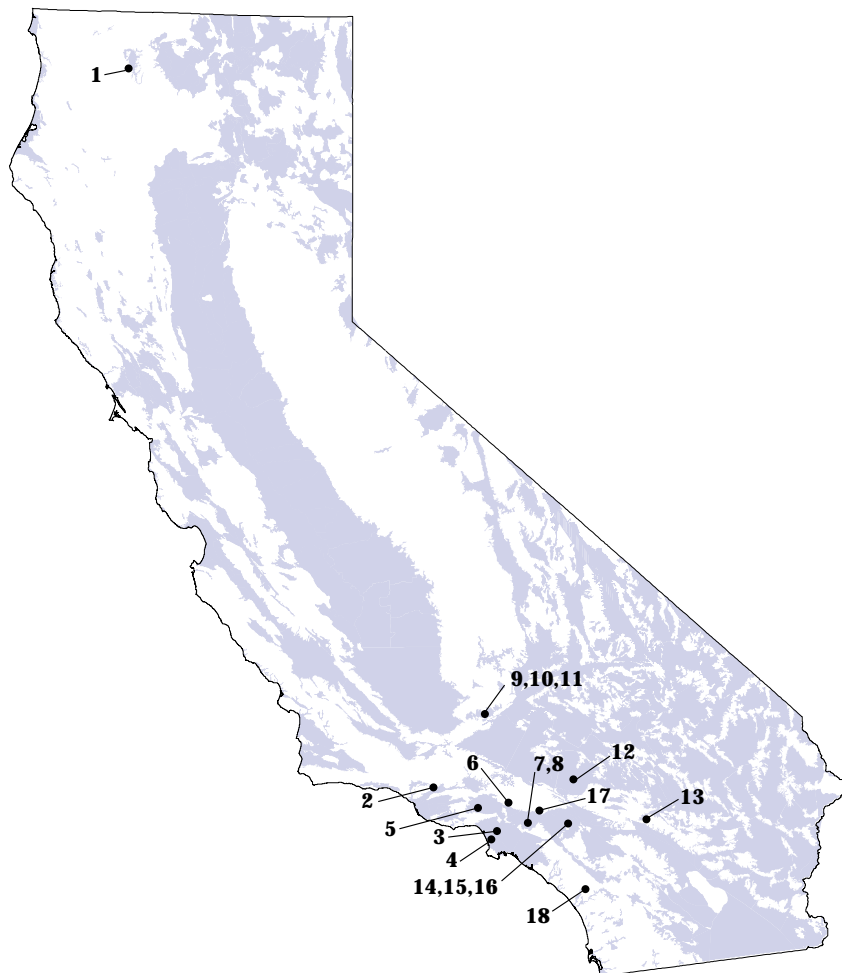
Court Name	Relationship to DWR Bulletin 118 Basin Name; County	No.	Restrict Pumping	Filed in Court	Final Decision
1—Scott River Stream System	Scott River Valley; Siskiyou	1-5		1970	1970
2—Santa Paula Basin	Sub-basin of Santa Clara River Valley Basin; Ventura	4-4	Yes	1991	1991
3—Central Basin	Northeast part of Coastal Plain of Los Angeles County Basin; Los Angeles	4-11	No	1962	1962
4—West Coast Basin	Southwest part of Coastal Plain of Los Angeles County Basin; Los Angeles	4-11	No	1946	1946
5—Upper Los Angeles River Area	San Fernando Valley Basin (entire watershed); Los Angeles	4-12		1955	1955
6—Raymond Basin	Northwest part of San Gabriel Valley Basin; Los Angeles	4-13	No	1937	1937
7—Main San Gabriel Basin Puente Narrows, <i>Addendum to Main San Gabriel Basin decision</i>	San Gabriel Valley Basin, excluding Raymond Basin and Puente Basin; Los Angeles	4-13	Yes	1968 1972	1972 1972
8—Puente Basin	San Gabriel Valley Basin, excluding Raymond Basin and Main San Gabriel Basin; Los Angeles	4-13		1985	1985
9—Cummings Basin	Cummings Valley Basin; Kern	5-27	Yes	1966	1966
10—Tehachapi Basin	Tehachapi Valley West Basin and Tehachapi Valley East Basin; Kern	5-28, 6-45	Yes	1966	1966
11—Brite Basin	Brite Valley; Kern	5-80	Yes	1966	1966
12—Mojave Basin Area Adjudication	Lower, Middle and Upper Mojave River Valley Basins; El Mirage and Lucerne Valley Basins; San Bernardino	6-40 - 643, 7-19	No	1990	1990
13—Warren Valley Basin	Part of Warren Valley Basin; San Bernardino	7-12	No	1976	1976
14—Chino Basin	Northwest part of Upper Santa Ana Valley Basin; San Bernardino and Riverside	8-2	No	1975	1975
15—Cucamonga Basin	North central part of Upper Santa Ana Valley Basin; San Bernardino	8-2			
16—San Bernardino Basin Area	Northeast part of Upper Santa Ana Basin; San Bernardino and Riverside	8-2		1963	1963
17—Six Basins	Six sub-basins in northwest upper Santa Ana Valley; Upper and Lower Claremont Heights, Canyon, Pomona, Live Oak and Ganesha; Los Angeles; small portions of Upper Claremont Heights and Canyon are in San Bernardino County	4-14, 8-2	Yes	1998	1998
18—Santa Margarita River Watershed	The Santa Margarita River watershed, including three groundwater basins: Santa Margarita Valley, Temecula Valley and Cahuilla <sup>1</sup> Valley Basins; San Diego and Riverside	9-4, 9-5, 9-6		1951	1951

<sup>1</sup>In Bulletin 118-80, Cahuilla Valley (9-6) is spelled differently.  
<sup>\*</sup>Denotes Same Web site

<sup>2</sup>Optimum Basin Management Plan approved by court Feb. 13, 2000; addresses water quality.

al ion	Watermaster and/or Web site
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0	Two local irrigation districts
6	Three-person Technical Advisory Committee from United Water CD, City of Ventura, and Santa Paula Basin Pumpers Association <a href="http://www.unitedwater.org">www.unitedwater.org</a>
5	DWR—Southern District <a href="http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd/watermaster/watermaster.html">www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd/watermaster/watermaster.html</a>
1	DWR—Southern District <a href="http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd/watermaster/watermaster.html">www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd/watermaster/watermaster.html</a>
9	Superior Court appointee
4	Raymond Basin Management Board
3	Water purveyors and water districts elect a nine-member board <a href="http://www.watermaster.org">www.watermaster.org</a>
2	Two consulting engineers
5	Three consultants
2	Tehachapi-Cummings County Water District <a href="http://www.tccwd.com/gwm.htm">www.tccwd.com/gwm.htm</a> *
3	Tehachapi-Cummings County Water District*
0	Tehachapi-Cummings County Water District*
6	Mojave Water Agency, 7-member board <a href="http://www.mojavewater.org/mwa700.htm">www.mojavewater.org/mwa700.htm</a>
7	Hi-Desert Water District <a href="http://www.mojavewater.org">www.mojavewater.org</a>
8	Nine people, recommended by producers and appointed by the court. <a href="http://www.cbwm.org">www.cbwm.org</a>
	Not yet appointed, operated as part of Chino Basin
9	One representative each from Western Municipal Water District of Riverside County and San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; San Bernardino County
8	Nine-member board representing all parties to the judgment
6	U.S. District Court appointee



### Locations of Adjudicated Groundwater Basins in California

The numbers on this map indicate the locations of adjudicated groundwater basins in California. They correspond to the numbers by the court name for the adjudicated basins listed in the first column on page two.

For most basins, the court has defined a "safe yield." Extraction may exceed this value during some years as a part of the operating range that is allowed in the judgment. The table on pages 2 and 3 lists the following information: the court name of the adjudicated basin, the relationship of that basin or sub-basin to the basins defined in DWR *Bulletin 118*, the number of the basin, whether the Watermaster can restrict extraction to protect groundwater quality, the date the case was filed in court and the date of the final decision, and the Watermaster and the Watermaster's Web site.

Although adjudication of groundwater basins has resulted in a reduction of the amount of groundwater that is extracted, the total amount of water consumed has continued to increase. As a result, agencies in most adjudicated basins have imported surface water or are looking for water to import to meet increased demand.

The original court decisions provided Watermasters with the authority to regulate extraction of the **quantity** of groundwater; however, they omitted authority to regulate extraction to protect water **quality** or to prevent the spread of contaminants in the groundwater. Because water quantity and water quality are inseparable, Watermasters are recognizing that they must also manage for quality.

Adjudication of a groundwater basin is one method of regulating extraction and allocating costs of replenishment. The Legislature has created nine groundwater management agencies that can pass ordinances to regulate extraction and has authorized some replenishment fees in 22 other types of water agencies. Three water districts have obtained statutory authority to regulate groundwater extraction. This authority is discussed in the *California Water Code*.

## For more information

For further information on groundwater management in California, contact the following Department of Water Resources' offices:

**Northern District** **530/529-7383**  
2440 Main Street  
Red Bluff, CA 96080-2398  
[www.dpla.water.ca.gov/nd](http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/nd)

**Central District** **916/227-7601**  
3251 "S" Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816-7017  
[www.dpla.water.ca.gov/cd](http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/cd)

**San Joaquin District** **559/230-3300**  
3374 E. Shields Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93726  
[www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd](http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd)

**Southern District** **818/543-4611**  
770 Fairmont Avenue  
Glendale, CA 91203-1035  
[www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd](http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd)

**Division of Planning and  
Local Assistance** **916/327-8861**  
1020 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
[www.dpla.water.ca.gov/cgi-bin/supply/gw.main.pl](http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/cgi-bin/supply/gw.main.pl)